

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5503

As of February 7, 2017

Title: An act relating to safety belts on school buses.

Brief Description: Requiring safety belts on school buses.

Sponsors: Senators Baumgartner, Keiser, Fortunato, Darneille and Saldaña.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/07/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires all school buses purchased after the effective date of this bill have a safety belt for each bus rider.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kellee Keegan (786-7429)

Background: Under current law, school buses are not required to provide seat belts for students riding the bus.

The current mandatory seat belt law requires all persons 16 years of age or older riding in a vehicle to wear a seat belt. All persons operating a motor vehicle must ensure that passengers under 16 years of age are either wearing a seat belt or securely fastened into an approved child restraint device. Any person violating this law has committed a traffic infraction. School buses are currently not included in the definition of motor vehicle for the purpose of this section.

The operation of each local school district's student transportation program is the responsibility of each district's board of directors. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in consultation with the transportation coordinators of the educational service districts, establishes the criteria required for purchasing school buses in regards to capacity and type as well as the competitive specifications for each category of school bus. Those specifications are required to meet federal motor vehicle safety standards as well as meet standards developed in rule by the OSPI.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: All school buses that are purchased after the effective date of this bill must have a safety belt for each bus rider. The safety belts must be designed to have a lap and shoulder belt. Buses operated by common carriers in urban transportation that may carry school children are exempted from this requirement.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill does not include private school buses. Seatbelts on buses are a good idea. It will be 20 years before all buses have seatbelts. The National Highway Traffic Safety Agency suggests school buses have seatbelts. It is preferable that this bill become effective on September 1st of this year.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Allan Jones, citizen; Glenn Gorton, OSPI.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.